

# UrbanPlanningUpdate

Newsletter of the Department of Urban Planning

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## Greetings from the Chair

The Department of Urban Planning (DUP) launched its spring edition of the Planning Lecture Series. DUP, through its Planning Lecture Series, is committed to generating a lasting discussion amongst multiple stakeholders to build awareness for the integral role urban planning and design. As the urban landscapes within the UAE and surrounding region rapidly emerge, the Planning Lecture Series features dynamic scholars from across the world who offer insight on critical elements that are necessary to build sustainable cities and built environments for today and tomorrow.

—Adnan Husnéin, Ph.D.

## The Legal Fallout of the Financial Crisis

On 24 February 2010, Dr. Doraliz Ortiz, from the Dubai-based Al-Sayyah law firm, presented the inaugural lecture entitled “The Legal Fallout of the Financial Crisis in Dubai.” In addition to shedding light on the litigation and lawsuits sustained by Dubai in the wake of the financial crisis, Dr. Ortiz highlighted the importance of urban planning which is particularly lacking in the city. She hypothesized that had there been better urban planning in place, many of the disputes between developers and investors would have been avoided.



The lecture was co-sponsored by the Department of Business Administration and facilitated by Dr. Khaled El-Khishin whose course on Planning Law and Practice covers issues related to planning and real estate legislation. Dr. Ortiz obtained her Juris Doctor (JD) graduate degree at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## Urban Design Field Trip to Al-Bastakiya



The Department of Urban Planning organized a trip led by Dr. Adnan Husnéin on 8 March 2010 to visit the historic district of Al-Bastakiya in Dubai. Students from urban planning, architecture and interior design took a step back in time to the days before electricity and air-conditioning, and explored the districts’ traditional courtyard houses and its winding streets. The area has also been known for the highest concentration of classic *barjeels* or wind-catchers in Dubai. This historic center dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. Today, some of these houses have been converted to museums displaying local culture and heritage while some house modern art galleries. The students also visited Al-Shindagha area and went on a memorable ‘*abra*’ cruise along Khor Dubai (the creek). Students were keen on recording their findings. Some sketched, some took snapshots of their favorite urban design elements, while others just soaked it all in! (Photomontage courtesy of Ahmad Dhiaeldeen)

## Ajman Urban Planning Conference

Post contributed by senior Khalfan Al-Suwaid

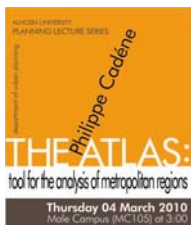
DUP faculty and students attended a number of sessions at the fourth edition of Ajman Urban Planning International Conference which was held from 29-31 March 2010 at the Ajman University.

The event focused on the redevelopment of city waterfronts around the world. Notable amongst the participants were Emilio Ambasz, Jon Lang, and Nader Ardalan,. Amabsz addressed the problematic which ties architecture to nature. He proposed a “pact of reconciliation” whereby both

“the House *and* the Garden,” are organically integrated. Prof. Lang presented the case study of Battery Park City in New York—a catalyst for urban development, while Prof. Ardalan offered a holistic perspective of the research focused upon the existing situation, threats and opportunities facing the eight countries related to the Gulf sea that unites them. He also presented salient reasons why new public policy initiatives are urgently needed as guidelines for more sustainable urban development.

### The Atlas as a Tool for Spatial Analysis

March 4, 2010 brought Professor Philippe Cadéne from University of Paris 7 to campus for a lecture, “The Atlas: Tool for the Analysis of Metropolitan Regions.” As a leading expert on cartography and urban geography and author of the Atlases on India and the Gulf countries (forthcoming with Prof. Brigitte Dumortier), Dr. Cadéne underscored the important role thematic mapping plays in deciphering urban environments especially in the context of rapidly developing areas in the world. His research combines anthropological approaches and theories of space.



### GISWORX 2010

The 5<sup>th</sup> GISWORX conference was held from 15-17 March in Dubai and included 24 workshops that reflected the significance of the conference in providing a major networking opportunity for experts and vendors to offer the latest technologies in GIS arena. In his keynote speech Eng. Abdul Kareem Al Raeisi, Executive Manager of the Abu Dhabi Spatial Data Infrastructure (AD-SDI) initiative offered insight into the initiative which was launched in June 2007 by Abu Dhabi Government to facilitate the exchange of geospatial data among various government entities and other stakeholders.

### Map Middle East 2010

Another equally important GIS event, the annual Middle East conference on geospatial information technology and application, was held on 22-24 March 2010. DUP chair, Dr. Adnan Husnéin joined an interactive panel discussion on environmental management which included Erica Dodd Verkerk (Program Manager-SDI, Geonovum, The Netherlands), Anil Kumar (Deputy Manager, Environment Agency Abu

Dhabi), Steve Cinderby (Stockholm Environment Institute, University of York), and Peter Ndunda (GIS manager, Green Belt Movement, Kenya). The panel’s recommendations highlighted the necessity to bridge the gap between policy makers, industry and local people, the use of participatory GIS as a vital tool for problem identification, understanding and solving, and the need for governments to facilitate public access to information.



### Al-Mirfa Planning Design Studio

Students enrolled in the Planning Design Studio II (UPL 305) have been working on a master plan for the town of Al Mirfa in the western region. As part of their research, they conducted a site visit to the area last February 9, 2010 to collect data and explore the town’s physical, biological and cultural attributes. Planning students met with officials from the Western Region Municipality (WRM) and discussed their proposed projects and the ongoing planning process. Students learned how the municipality in partnership with the Urban Planning Council has solicited public input by holding community *majlises* throughout the process. WRM’s Mr. Musabah Almarar helped facilitate the trip.



**Quote of the Month:** “It is not enough for a handful of experts to attempt the solution of a problem, to solve it, and then apply it. The restriction of knowledge to an elite group destroys the spirit of society and leads to intellectual impoverishment.”

—Einstein (1931) *quoted by* Steve Cinderby, *Map Middle East*, 24 March 2010